

Testimony before the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
RE: HB 5300

AN ACT REQUIRING LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL FOR THE MERGER OR CLOSING OF
INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AND
PROHIBITING THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY-TECHNICAL
COLLEGES.

Submitted by Lauren Doninger, EdD, LADC, LPC, Professor of Psychology, Gateway
Community College.

Dear Representative Elliott, Senator Slap, Representative Haines, Senator Witkos, and
Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5300. I have spent over 20 years on the
faculty of Gateway Community College and have been deeply committed to students, the
institution, and the system of public higher education. The system has never been perfect, but I
have always felt that my dedication and effort could make a difference.

Not any more.

I am not poetic enough to adequately describe to you what has happened to the morale at the
colleges. Dedicated, energetic faculty and staff have been reduced to husks. As resources have
been diverted, without pause or reflection, into a massive bureaucratic structure, the *actual*
colleges and our *actual* students have been left to wither. This was the *actual* plan - savings
through attrition. The attrition of seasoned staff, then massive hiring of untrained guided
pathways advisors (with no cogent plan to pay them after next year) has left students in a maze
of dysfunction - *this was the plan*. This massive, reckless, untested gamble has created harm to
current students. I am going to give you four examples - I saw all of these students in just two
days of office hours. Just imagine how many more there are.

Darius- He has a clear plan to go to SCSU for a BSN. He was inexplicably put in a computer
course, a course he doesn't need that will waste his time and financial aid. A colleague agreed
to let him enroll in her very late start psychology class - a class that he actually needs for his
degree plan. When he went to student services with the signed permission to enroll in the
psychology course, he was told that if he drops the computer class he will have to pay for it. He
is now spinning his wheels in a maze of contradictory information.

Hector - He wants to go to Southern for Sociology. On paper, he is able to graduate. He
was being rushed out the door with a degree that included nearly half of the credits in
ESL and only Introductory Sociology. He would be 'counted' as a 'success' on our
scorecard and set up for utter failure upon transfer. He is now in a maze of contradictory
information.

D'Asia -10 years ago she was at Gateway, ended up homeless, and dropped out. She has put her life together in remarkable ways. D'Asia came to Gateway in December to start over. She was told she couldn't start because of her failure 10 years ago. Then she was told she should go to Housatonic to reset her financial aid. Then at the last minute, she was told she could start at Gateway. She was not properly advised to take a fresh start. Now, in the middle of the semester, after faculty questioned why she wasn't given a fresh start, she is told she has to quickly take a fresh start. She is also in the maze.

John - wants to be an engineer. In the fall he got a D in elementary algebra and is now registered in both elementary AND college algebra - wasting his financial aid and setting him up to fail. He is in the maze.

There is massive dysfunction and the worst is on the horizon - a curriculum that has been thrown together without governance. Our students deserve better and our state deserves better. The Board and system office have shown no discipline. No self-reflection. No capacity to re-evaluate. They launched a plan to save money and when that didn't work they changed the reason for the plan. Please pass HB 5300 and insist that the accreditations of 12 colleges not be relinquished when there is nothing worthy to replace them.

Thank you.